

BOBBS MERRILL

HIRA SINGH

By
TALBOT MUNDY

On a box beside the bed Ranjoor Singh found writing-paper, envelopes, and requisition forms not yet filled out, but already signed with seal and a Turkish signature. There was a map, and a list of routes and villages. But best of all was a letter of instructions signed by a German officer. There were also other priceless things, of some of which I may chance to speak later.

I was told by Abraham that during the conversation following Ranjoor Singh's seizure of the papers the word Wassmuss was bandied back and forth a thousand times, the Turk growing rather more amenable each time the word was used. Finally the Turk resigned himself with a shrug of the shoulders, and was left in his tent with a guard of our men at each corner.

Then, for all the night was black and there were very few lanterns, the camp began to be turned upside down, Ranjoor Singh ordering everything thrown aside that could not be immediately useful to us. There were 40 carts, burdened to the breaking point, and 20 of them Ranjoor Singh abandoned as too heavy for our purpose. Most of the carts had been drawn by teams of six mules each, but 10 of them had been drawn by horses, and besides the Turkish captain's horse there were four other spare horses. There were also about a hundred sheep and some goats.

Ranjoor Singh ordered all the sheep packed into 14 of the carts, sheep and goats into four carts, and ammunition into the remaining two, leaving him in each cart for two men so that the guard who would be awake all night might ride and sleep. That left him with 4 spare horses. Leaving the Turkish officer his own horse, but taking the saddle for himself, he gave Tugendheim one, and another, the third to Gooja Singh—he being next non-commissioned officer to me in order of seniority, and having had punishment enough—and the fourth horse, he himself took. Then he chose 60 men to cease from being infantry and became a sort of cavalry again—cavalry without saddles, as yet, or stirrups—cavalry with rifles—cavalry with aching feet—but cavalry none the less.

He picked the 60 with great wisdom, choosing for the most part men who had given no trouble, but included 10 or 12 grumblers, but enough for a day or two I did not understand why. There was forethought in everything he did.

The sheep that could not be crowded into the carts he ordered butchered there and then, and the meat distributed among the men; and all the plunder that he decided not to take he ordered heaped in one place where it would not be visible unless deliberately looked for. He plundered money that he found in the Turk's tent he hid under the corn in the foremost cart, and we found it very useful later on. The few of our men who had not fallen asleep were for burning the piled-up plunder, but he threatened to shoot whoever dared set match to it.

"Shall we light a beacon to warn the countryside?" said he.

A little after midnight there began to be attempts by Turkish soldiers to break through and run for Angora. But I had kept my twenty men ready with threats of being made to carry ammunition—even giving the butt of my rifle to work set down in the regulations. So it came about that we captured every single fugitive. They were five all told, and I sent them, tied together, down to Ranjoor Singh. Thereupon he went to the Turk, and promised him personal violence if another of his men should attempt to break away. So the Turk gave orders that were obeyed.

Then, when all the plunder in the camp had been rearranged, and the mules and horses reapportioned, four hours yet before dawn, Ranjoor Singh took out his fountain-pen and executed what followed possible. Without Abraham I do not know what he would have done. He made use of Abraham as the best tool available, and that is no proof he could not have done as well by other means. I have learned this: that Ranjoor Singh, with that faith of his in God, can do anything. Anything. He is a true man, and God puts thoughts into his heart.

Among the Turk's documents were big sheets of paper for official correspondence, similar to that on which his orders were written. Ranjoor Singh ascertained from Abraham that he who had signed those orders was the German officer highest in command in all that region, who had left Angora a month previously to superintend the requisitioning.

So Ranjoor Singh sent for Tugendheim, whose writing would have the proper clerical appearance, and by a lantern in the tent dictated to him a letter in German to the effect that this Turkish officer, by name Nazim, with all his men and carts and animals, had been diverted to the aid of Wassmuss. The letter went on to say that on his way back to Angora this same high German officer would himself cover the territory thus left uncared for, so that nothing need be done about it in the meanwhile. (He wrote that to prevent investigation and perhaps pursuit by the men in Angora who waited Nazim and his plunder.)

At the foot of the letter Abraham carefully copied the signature of the very high German officer, after making many experiments first on another sheet of paper.

Tugendheim of course protested vehemently that he would do no such thing, when ordered to write. But Ranjoor Singh ordered the barrel of a Turkish soldier's rifle thrust into the fire, and the German did not protest to the point of permitting his feet to be singed. He wrote a very careful letter, even suggesting better phraseology—his reason for that being that, since he was thus far committed, our total escape would be the best thing possible for him. The Germans, who are so fond of terrifying others, are merciless to their own who happen to be guilty of weak conduct, and to have said he was compelled to write that letter would have been no excuse of we were caught. Henceforward it was strictly to his interest to help us.

Finally, when the letter had been sealed in its envelope, there came the problem of addressing it, and the Turk seemed ignorant on that point, or else stupid. Perhaps he was willfully ignorant, hoping that the peculiar form of the address might cause suspicion and investigation. But what with Tugendheim's familiarity with German military custom, and Ranjoor Singh's swift thought, an address was devised that served the purpose, judging by results.

Then came the problem of delivering the letter. To have sent one of the Turkish soldiers with it would have been the same thing as marching to Angora and surrendering, for of course the Turk would have told of what happened in the night, and where it happened, and all about it. To have sent one of the half-starved Syrians would probably have amounted to the same thing; for the sake of a bellyful, or from fear of ill-treatment the wretched man would very likely tell too much. But Abraham was different. Abraham was an educated man, who well understood the value to us of silence, and who seemed to hate both Turks and Germans equally.

So Ranjoor Singh took Abraham aside and talked with him five minutes. And the end of that was that a Turkish soldier was compelled to strip himself and change clothes with Abraham, the Turk taking no pleasure at all in the exchange. Then Abraham was given a horse, and on the outside of the envelope in one corner was written in German, "Bearer should be supplied with saddle for his horse and sent back at once with acknowledgment of receipt of this."

There and then Ranjoor Singh gave Abraham the letter, shook hands with him, helped him on his horse, and sent him on his way—three hours before dawn. Then promptly he gave orders to all the other Syrians to strike camp and resume their regular occupation of driving mules.

The Turkish officer, though not deprived of his horse, was not permitted to ride until after daylight, because of the difficulty otherwise of guarding him in the dark. The same with Tugendheim; although there was little reason for suspecting him of wanting to escape, with that letter fresh in his memory, he was nevertheless compelled to walk until daylight should make escape impossible.

The Turkish officer was made to march in front with his four or forty soldiers, who were given back their rifles, but no bayonets or ammunition. Gooja Singh, whose two and twenty were ready by that time to pull his beard out hair by hair, was given fifty men who hated him less fiercely and set to march next behind the Turks. Then came the carts in single column, and after them Tugendheim and the remainder of our infantry. Behind the infantry rode the cavalry, and very last of all rode Ranjoor Singh, since that was for the present the post of chiefest danger.

As for me I tumbled into a cart and fell asleep at once, scarcely hearing the order shouted to the Turk to go forward. The men who had been on guard with me all did the same, falling asleep like I almost before their bodies touched the corn.

(To Be Continued.)



Rippling Rhymes

Walt Mason

In Germany.

In Germany all things are mixed, and nothing's settled, nothing's fixed. One government has quite a boom, and then it journeys up the flume; another comes, and it may bust, and leave behind a cloud of dust. And old Ex-Bill, he sits and blinks, and many kinds of thoughts he thinks. "They can't cut ice without a throne," he sighs, as he sits there alone; "they talk republics and the like; republics! For the love of Mike! That sort of stuff is purely rot; they'll have to send for X and Gott." Of course you'll say his thoughts are vain, that he is neither safe nor sane, that Germans wouldn't dare to place this relic of a bughouse race upon the throne we overstep, but wait a while, already yet. It's sure, when all is said and done, we cannot trust the tricky Huns. He'd do the things we least expect, although the universe he wrecked, if thereby he could jar the foes who lately led him by the nose. And Germans want old things again, the throne, the crown, and war lord men. And so the dreams of old Ex-Bill are not so wild, already still.

(Copyright by George Matthew Adams.)

Frederic Haskin's Letter

(Special Correspondent of The Argus.)

The Rent Rebellion.

New York, April 3.—New York is on the verge of a rent rebellion. At least, such is the current report being whispered in a loud stage whisper in Gotham. Hints of this coming catastrophe are almost as numerous as the tenants recently evicted from their homes, and the atmosphere in all of the residential districts appears to be charged with desperate motives.

Gradually, the tenants who have suffered from rent-profitteering during the past year are organizing in their various boroughs and preparing for action. They have not yet decided just what the action is to be, but all are agreed that they must take it. Tenants' mass meetings are being held on an average of every other night; tenants' petitions and protests are keeping the printers busy, and the temper of these meetings and protests may be gathered from the following excerpt from an ex-soldier tenant's speech which was delivered from a soap-box platform the other evening:

"We want to war to protect our homes, ladies and gentlemen, and now we have returned we find them wrested from us by an enemy more insidious, more villainous than the Hun. I need not say who that enemy is—"

Here loud applause from the audience signified that he need not, but the speaker could not resist the temptation to say it anyway. "You all know who it is," he continued. "You have all suffered from his hideous attacks. That enemy, ladies and gentlemen, is the rent profiteer."

A few nights later, a circular was distributed from the platform of a similar meeting, calling on all outraged tenants to join the Tenants' Rights League of Greater New York, "which is seeking to bring together into one organization one million tenants to resist to the utmost, through concerted action, further profiteering in the home of our people."

"Full page advertisements in the daily papers and placards in the street cars, subway trains and elevated trains will make these leeching home-breakers run up the white flag and call for mercy," pursued the circular dramatically. "This is your battle. Do not look for a substitute to do your fighting. Get on the firing line with your victimized brother and go into action at once."

So far as is known, the only firing line the tenants have in mind at present is situated in the midst of the state legislature at Albany, but occasionally there is a threat of staging a more violent one should this battle end disastrously. The conduct of the legislature on the question of rent-profitteering has been one to challenge the administration of all students of politics. It has professed repeatedly in the form of innumerable bills a stern desire to punish greedy landlords. According to one Albany

authority, it has introduced as many as 81 such disciplinary measures during the present session. Again we have heard it was 18, but whether 18 or 80, the fact remains, as the said authority points out, that there is nothing easier than to introduce a bill in any legislative body, provided you are a member. The difficulty lies in getting it passed.

For a while this sympathetic but impotent course satisfied the tenants, but recently, as the evictions and dispossession notices increased, it was suggested to the legislature that a little action would not be displeasing. Thus, urged and prodded by their constituents, the members of the state assembly at last reluctantly narrowed their attention to nine of the most promising bills and announced that they were about ready to put a few of them through.

Immediately, new protests began to arrive in Albany, but this time from outraged landlords, who asserted that the passage of any bills curtailing their activities would simply spoil everything. They pleaded with the legislature to pass a law exempting mortgages from taxes, so that people would build more houses. When you restrict the price of rents, they told their state congressmen, you are merely creating a palliative and are making no effort to strike at the roots of the problem. The thing to do is to build, build, build!

This rather bewildered the legislature, many of its members were inclined to believe that the landlords were right, especially since they began to hear disquieting reports of the spread of tenants' soviets and residential bolshevism in New York. Thus, all might have gone well with rent-profitteering had not the landlords sent a large delegation to combat an even larger delegation of tenants to Albany. This delegation made the mistake of being impolite to the legislators. They said that if laws were passed restricting the profits from rents they would go to court and have them declared unconstitutional, and they frankly told the assembly that they had the inalienable right to profiteer if they wanted to.

Now, to profiteer is one thing and to admit it quite shamelessly is another, which the landlords soon found out. As one scandalized editor commented, "no one could fail to be amazed at their indiscretion that agents and owners should put on all the price that the trade will fairly bear is to be expected," he said, "but that they should shake the big stick at the same time and shout percentages which no one else can consider fair or reasonable is, to say the least, a psychological blunder. It inevitably works to their own disadvantage. Blatant talk just furnishes the apology, the excuse,

which demagogues, or dreamers, or both, need to put over repressive legislation, regardless of economic truth."

Whatever it may have furnished to the demagogues and dreamers, it at least furnished the tenants with a splendid argument. After the landlords got through, in fact, the tenants really didn't have to say much at all. They had come prepared to convince the legislature, by a tremendous accumulation of evidence and argument, that rent-profitteering was going on, and then the landlords beat them to it and supplied all the evidence for them. It was a little disappointing, but most profitable.

The most important rent-relief bill now before the legislature is one which construes as "presumptively oppressive" all rent increases in excess of 25 per cent, which have been made in New York since April 1, 1919, and which gives the courts power to pass upon all such cases. Another limits a landlord's profits to 20 per cent under the broad police powers of the state, which may be extended to cover matters affecting public health.

The tenants had hoped to secure even better terms than these. They want a bill passed, limiting a landlord's profits to 10 per cent on the same sort of a basis that loan sharks are limited in their profits, as well as public utilities, such as street cars and gas. Housing under present conditions, they assert, is just as much of a public service as these latter, and should be treated as such. Indeed, some of the tenants' leagues are working for municipal housing with ever-increasing gusto. The city has appropriated money with which to build docks for rent; "so why not houses?" they ask.

While the city has so far exhibited no enthusiasm for a civic housing program, several of its officials have recently said that they feared it would be forced upon them. The city is short of houses and apartments for hundreds of thousands of families. The majority of its apartments are crowded to the point of being a menace to public health; while recently large numbers of the homeless have been compelled to seek shelter in dilapidated lofts.

Housing facilities, as is only too well known, are scarce all over the country as a result of the lack of building during the war, but nowhere else have conditions reached such an acute stage as they have in New York and in the nearby New Jersey suburbs. So distressing are the conditions in Hackensack, for instance, that the municipality recently offered to evict tenants the unoccupied apartments in the city jail.

Commenting on this at a recent tenants' mass meeting in New York, the speaker stated that such an offer would be eagerly accepted by many families in his neighborhood.

"No, we won't occupy the jail," corrected a mild-faced tenant in the audience, flourishing his arms in a blood-thirsty manner. "We'll reserve that for the landlords!"

OF ALL
The first class candies made today I think Abraham's Pecan Roll leads them all.
(Said by one who knows.)

ADVENTURES OF THE TWINS

by Olive Roberts Barton.

A Visit to Mother.

"I'm sure your monkey is not in Topsy-Turvy Land," said the Magical Mushroom, "so Green Shoes and I are going to take you to another place. The Fairy Queen has nine hundred and ninety-nine kingdoms, you know, and we have permission to take you to them all, but first we are going to take you home. All aboard now for the big chestnut tree in the meadow!"

Quick as a wink, the kiddies were standing beside the old stone where they always hid their treasures, and Mother was on the porch calling them to lunch as though they had never been away at all. When they ran to the house she didn't seem surprised a bit, and all she said was, "Why, Nancy, dear, how did you ever get so much mud on your clean apron? And Nicky, just look at your feet! I suppose it's getting too damp to let you children play out of doors so much."

"Oh, that," replied Nancy looking down, "I got hunting truffles for Mr. Pig in Topsy-Turvy land."

Mother smiled. "Nicky, I have been telling you children bedtime stories again," she said. "And if he isn't careful your imaginations will run away with you."

"Oh, no," corrected Nicky. "It's the Green Shoes that run away with us."

But Mother only laughed again. "Well Uncle Dick may tell you all the stories he wants to now for as long as the weather is bad I'll have to let you play indoors."

That afternoon it started to rain, then it blew up cold, and it was a long, long time before the children could get as far as the meadow to play.

But Mr. Sun came out bright and warm one day and melted the snow, and away went the kiddies to hunt up their fairy friends. Spring was coming.

(Copyright, 1920, N. E. A.)

As sure as you are a foot high—

you will like this Camel Turkish and Domestic blend!

Camel CIGARETTES

YOU never got such cigarette-contentment as Camels hand you. Camels quality and expert blend of choice Turkish and choice Domestic Tobaccos make this goodness possible—and make you prefer this Camel blend to either kind of tobacco smoked straight!

Camels mellow-mildness is a revelation! Smoke them with freedom without tiring your taste! They leave no unpleasant cigarette aftertaste nor unpleasant cigarette odor!

Give Camels every test—then compare them puff-for-puff with any cigarette in the world!

Camels are sold everywhere in scientifically sealed packages of 20 cigarettes for 20 cents; or ten packages (200 cigarettes) in a glassine paper-covered carton. We strongly recommend this carton for the home or office supply or when you travel.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO. Winston-Salem, N. C.

Give Your Children Bread-and-Milk

Bread is nature's one example of a complete ration.

It contains everything needed for maintaining health and energy.

Food for muscle, food for bone, food for brain.

Good, rich milk combined with Bread forms the ideal food for growing youngsters.

Keep the milk-bottle always handy. When the kiddies come begging for "a slice of Bread"

Make it a bowl of Bread-and-milk.

Tri-City Baked Bread is Bread at its Best—always pure, wholesome and delicious. It will well repay you to

Eat—"Two Slices for One"

for

TRI-CITY BAKERIES